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The author's analysis of reading material content of second language texts examines achievement of graphemic-phonemic contrasts, sequence of association in the process of reading, and control of sounds, grammar, subject matter, and cultural content. Because the orthography-sound association skill cannot be separated from the sound-meaning skill, reading pedagogy must concentrate on the fundamental "see-say-think" sequence of association. There should be close controls over the sound and grammar patterns and the cultural context of the beginning and intermediate reading texts for overseas English classrooms. In adapting traditional, "Direct Method" texts for use in a linguistically-oriented approach, the teacher should (1) decide upon the phonological targets, based on a contrastive analysis, (2) select the grammatical problems contained in the narrative or dialog (that are not treated as structure points for study in the text), (3) select vocabulary to work on choosing those items of phonological or cultural difficulty, and (4) examine the drills, which may have too much emphasis on the content of the dialog or narrative. The steps in composing controlled reading texts, also discussed by the author, are illustrated with excerpts from an elementary reading lesson for Hawaiian schools, based on a contrastive analysis of Standard English and Hawaii Islands Dialect. (AMM)

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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Adapting and Composing Reading Texts

Andrew MacLeish

In teaching reading in the second-language classroom there are a number of considerations which should precede analysis of content, or at least be taken into account along with it. The approach demands consideration of a complex of overlapping matters: the achievement of graphemic-phonemic contrasts, the sequence of association in the process of reading, and the control of sounds, grammar, subject matter, and cultural content of the text.

The achievement of across-system graphemic-phonemic contrasts is the first step, and the one most frequently neglected. Historical reasons can be given for the shape of graphic symbols and for their use to represent certain sounds, but they are neither rational nor philosophical explanations. The only explanation is convention; people have agreed that certain graphic shapes will symbolize certain sounds and sound sequences in spoken language. This is true for both "difficult" and "easy" orthographies.

The complexity of the symbol has nothing to do with its function, in spite of the widespread notion that simple symbols have correspondences with sound, while complex symbols represent ideas. The readers of all written languages are "getting" sounds from the printed page. Even so-called wordwriting, such as Arabic symbols for numbers which speakers of many languages see the same but read differently, evokes an oral response to the graphic stimuli.

One of the criteria and evidences for automaticity in the hearing-speaking skills is that the form, or phonetic shape, of the speech sinks below the threshold of attention. The same situation prevails in the reading-writing skills to a more complex degree. As the reader reads, two systems of symbolization sink below the threshold of attention: the graphic representation of sounds plus the phonetic representation, vocalized or internalized, of the meanings or content. Writing as a system of secondary representation for meaning and sound as a primary representation for meaning are functioning simultaneously, although the reader is aware only of *what* he is reading, the content. This is what Fries called the "Stage of 'Productive' Reading."[1]

A writer encodes from meaning to sound, oral or silent, and then from sound to orthography. The reader decodes from orthography to sound, oral or silent, and then from sound to meaning.

It is apparent, then, that there are three systems of associations functioning in the act of reading—one between orthography and sound, one between

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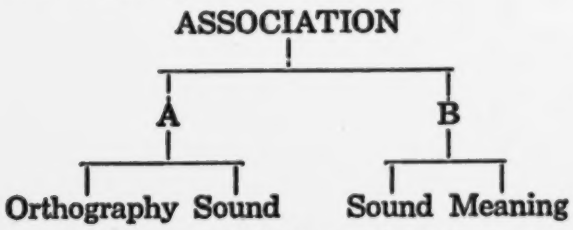
[1] Charles C. Fries, *Linguistics and Reading* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 205.

sound and meaning, and one, the hierarchy of association, between the two basic systems:



It is wrong to believe that in a serious attempt at language communication the orthography-sound association skill is learned independently of the sound-meaning skill. It must not be separated from any of its component aspects. The reader of the orthography of any language participates in a highly complex system of representations and associations which he learns by bringing the component aspects into coordination with each other.

Since we are interested in reading pedagogy, we must concentrate on the fundamental "see-say-think" sequence of association. Since sound is the important connecting link between orthography and meaning, we can only agree with Lado who says, "The student should not be asked to transcribe whole utterances or even read them without having heard or imitated them" [2] . . . and with Samuel Martin: "The student should not read the comprehension material before hearing it. If he does, most of its value is destroyed." [3]

The crux of our discussion, then, is that in preparing beginning and intermediate reading texts for use in the overseas ESL classroom we must exercise close controls. We will not suggest the principles upon which we build this control, assuming that graphemic-phonemic contrasts have been made so that a Romanized text can be reasonably well read. But we cannot assume, as many books do, that the "language" of the text has been mastered before the students meet it in the reading lesson. Thus, we are here interested in the control of sound and grammar patterns, and in the control of cultural context, whether it be the context of the first or second language, and in the control of subject matter within this context.

We pose two problems. First, we will examine how we can *adapt* the still-rather-conventional uncontrolled text to some degree of control over sound and grammatical patterns. Second, let's assume an ideal situation in which we can *compose* our own reading text with the necessary controls built into it.

The first situation is illustrated in a sample reading lesson from a well-known "direct method" text widely used in Asia and Africa.

A PICNIC

Mrs. Brown: What are we going to do today?
Jack: Let's go fishing.
Mrs. Brown: What do you want to do, Mary?
Mary: Can't we go to the cinema again?
George: She wants another box of chocolates.
Mary: No I don't. Let's go for a picnic.
Mr. Brown: Look at those black clouds.
Mrs. Brown: Never mind. We can shelter somewhere if it rains.

So they went for a picnic in the woods. Mr. Brown carried a heavy basket. The sun was shining when they left the house, and at the end of

[2] Robert Lado, *Language Teaching* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1964), p. 52.

[3] Samuel E. Martin, *Language Study Techniques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 7.

their walk they were glad to be in the shade of the trees. While George and Jack were making a fire to boil the water, Mrs. Brown got the things out of the basket, and Mary played with Rose.

"Did you forget anything this time?" Mr. Brown asked.

"No, nothing," Mrs. Brown replied. "Let me see—bread, butter, cups, plates, knives, spoons, cake, sugar—where's the milk?"

"At home, perhaps," said Mr. Brown.

"No, it isn't. Jack was carrying it. Here it is."

When the water was boiling, George filled the tea-pot, and soon they were sitting on the ground having their tea.

"You can carry the basket home, Jack," Mr. Brown said. "It's quite light now. And don't forget to put the fire out."

The format of this lesson is a mixture of a dialogue and narrative, and the length, I think we'll agree, is about the maximum. The cultural context is British, as evidenced by the vocabulary and syntax. I do not include the exercises which follow since it is not my intent to analyze the whole lesson. We merely need to point out that there are too many problems in the reading passage to enable efficient teaching.

Let's assume that we are to adapt this text for a Thai secondary classroom—where it is actually used. Step One: decide upon the phonological targets. A contrastive analysis shows us some of the consonant and vowel problems in this lesson.

English	*Thai Substitution*	*Examples from the Text*
/š/	/s/, /č/	fishing, she
/i/ before C	/iy/ + C	picnic, sitting
/ay/ before C	/ay/ + ø	shining
/aw/ before C	/aw/ + ø	Brown
/kl/ initial	/kr/ initial	clouds
/ps/ final	/p/ final	cups
/ɔy/ before C	/ɔy/ + ø	boiling
/s/, /z/ final	ø	let's, rain
/ð/, /θ/ initial	/d/; /t/ or /s/	they, things

All English final consonant clusters constitute a major problem for Thai learners of English because consonant clusters never occur in syllable final position in Thai. The Thai speaker learning English will omit the final cluster, or his attempt at it will result in a compromise.

Quite obviously, this is too much for one lesson. We must choose two or three phonological targets, and these choices must be made on the basis of their frequency of occurrence in the second language and in the text, what has been taught previous to this lesson, and how well our students have mastered these problems. Here is the choice of targets, and they are all contrastive. Even these may be too many. At any rate, we concentrate on the chosen targets and ignore the rest. This is all we can do.

I. Initial /ð/, /θ/

English	*Thai Substitution*
/ðoz/	/doz/
/ðey/	/dey/
/ðer/	/der/
/ðis/	/dis/
/θiŋz/	/tiŋs/, /siŋs/

II. Final /z/, /s/

English	*Thai Substitution*
/klaudz/	/krauts/
/reynz/	/reyns/
/wudz/	/wuts/
/rowz/	/rows/
/wənts/	/wənts/, /wənt/
/kəps/	/kəps/, /kəpt/

Step Two is to understand the grammatical problems in the text and choose the ones we wish to concentrate on. Our contrastive analysis shows us the problems of underdifferentiation, overcorrection, confusion of affixes and pronoun forms, interference of native language habits, distribution, and so forth. Here are just a few of the grammatical problems encountered in the text.

(1) Subject-Verb agreement, particularly when MV and Aux are present. The concepts of the meaning of Aux are difficult.

(2) Inflectional suffixes of number and tense:
   (a) underdifferentiation: *she want*
   (b) confusion of unfamiliar affixes: *breads, butters, sugars, cakes*
   (c) overcorrection: *you wants, we cans shelter*

(3) Confusion of personal pronoun forms: *Her* wants a box of chocolates. *Their* walk.

(4) Underdifferentiation of determiner significance: *the/a* ground; *the/a* basket; *those* clouds

(5) Answering the negative question *Can't we go?* the Thai has the habit of using the incorrect introductory *yes/no*: *No, we can; Yes, we can't.*

(6) Modification structures: *clouds black; basket heavy.*

(7) Problems in question formation:
   (a) Omission of the Aux: *Go we to the cinema? Forget you anything?*
   (b) Selection of the incorrect form of the Aux: *Do you forget anything?*
   (c) Wrong word order: *We go can.*

(8) Present and past continuous tense formations are difficult. The sentences in the narrative are too long to introduce the past continuous. They should be broken into shorter sentences.

(9) The negative contraction: *can* : *can't*

(10) *forget* and *want* + infinitive

Clearly the number of problems and their complexity is appalling. Yet this is, in a very real sense, the confusion that faces the Thai student confronted with this text. Again, on the basis of frequency of occurrence, previous teaching, and student progress we must choose two or three grammatical targets.

forget + infinitive: 1 occurrence
want + infinitive: 1 occurrence
past continuous: 5 occurrences = *was shining, was carrying, was boiling, were making, were sitting*

Step Three is to pull the vocabulary on which we wish to concentrate. The criteria here are not only phonological ones, but also cultural. The list of words concentrates not only on supplementing the phonology of the lesson but also on frequent words from Western culture which are not common in rural Thailand. And the list includes

those Briticisms which are not common in the American teacher's usage.

picnic	butter	woods
basket	plates	fire
shine	spoons	nothing
shade	knife/knives	quite
boil	light	cinema

While I do not mean to slight the important and difficult problems of teaching vocabulary, I leave it by suggesting the obvious: in both adapting and composing texts we do well to have reference, at some point, to Michael West's list and to those words marked A or AA in the Thorndike list.

To complete our adaptation we should pay close attention to the drills. In many texts which teach reading at beginning or intermediate levels there is too much initial emphasis on the content of the dialogue or narrative. Further, grammar drills, when they occur, often confuse the student by asking for rearrangement of distorted sequences, by asking for phrasal rather than for word-order rearrangement, or by presenting questions which can utilize two or more of the responses suggested in the question instructions. Or drills may require abnormal changes or unnecessary multiple changes which can get in the way of learning.[4]

If I have suggested nothing else in the foregoing, I hope I have suggested that many standard reading texts, particularly those which have been current overseas for a number of years, need adaptation from the point of view of current thinking about the sequence in the process of reading. And a good contrastive analysis can enable us to come directly to grips with our students' problems and begin the job efficiently. A contrastive analysis is not absolutely essential in cross-language teaching, of course. We can listen. But the analysis saves time by enabling us to predict problems; thus we can quickly judge the desirability of a specific text or lesson and make reasonably valid decisions on what to do with it.

The second situation is the one in which we can compose our own reading text with the necessary controls built into it. This situation is illustrated in an elementary reading lesson for Hawaiian schools. Here the basic problem is the same, though we are not yet very sure of the best way to write cross-dialect lessons, in this case Standard English-Island Dialect. Many people believe that contrastive analysis as a basis for cross-dialect materials preparation is unnecessary. Recent discussions and demonstrations, however, indicate that contrastive analysis may be actually more valuable in cross-dialect than in cross-language teaching.[5]

Here is the narrative portion of the lesson for the Standard English curriculum on the island of Hawaii.

> Jeff travel*ed* from Illinois, on the mainland, to the Big Island. The jet trip took ten hours. He stopped in San Francisco. His father came

[4] See Andrew MacLeish, "Composing Pattern Practice Drills," *On Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Series III, ed. Betty W. Robinett (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1967), pp. 141–148.

[5] This premise was discussed among linguists, psychologists, educators, and Island teachers in a conference at Hilo, Hawaii in June, 1966. By June, 1967 all the targets in the lessons at the Hilo Language Development Project were based on Standard English-Island Dialect phonological and grammatical contrasts.

with him and they visited a friend in Honolulu on the way to Hilo. Jeff likes the Big Island and sees many things he never saw in Illinois. He's talking with his friend Jim.

The Standard English lesson contains both a narrative and a dialogue; the latter, reproduced below, is at the end of the lesson. The dialogue is easiest to write; we can get a larger number of complex structures into a dialogue in a natural way than we can get into a narrative or exposition. Thus the dialogue contains the grammatical targets.

As we compose our own text we can, if we are careful, include in it structures to be taught for the first time. Notice the absence of continuous tense forms in the primary grade Standard English lesson. Our adapted text is rich in its variety of complex tense patterns which, in that case, must be presented before the reading lesson is begun.

The subject matter of the Standard English lesson is basic to mainland culture as well as to the culture of the island of Hawaii. Step One is to decide upon the phonological targets we wish to include.

Final V or C + /z/:

he's	canefields
hours	foods
sees	lichies
things	was
his	as
cornfields	

Final V or C + /d/:

mainland	glad	good
visited	did	head
friend	island	hard
travelled	had	

The problem of final vowel or consonant plus /z/ occurs six times in the narrative portion of the lesson. The problem of final vowel or consonant plus /d/ also occurs six times in the narrative portion. These are italicized. This is a high frequency of targets for such a short narrative, but we've focussed on only two problems and kept others to an absolute minimum, if we haven't eliminated most of them.

Step Two is to decide upon the grammatical target.

Statement ——→ Wh-Question

When did you come?
What do you like?
Which island foods do you like?
What do you think. . . ?

Grammatical structures other than the focal one are kept within the range of the young Island Dialect speaker.

Step Three is the introduction of new vocabulary. Note here the relative simplicity of the vocabulary for beginning students and the small number of new words introduced. This short list also supplements the teaching of phonological problems.

visited	brought
lakes	rubbing

Step Four, the focus on spelling patterns, graphemic-phonemic contrasts, is almost impossible to achieve in adapting a reading text. But it's easy to do when we compose our own.

cornfields	head	mahimahi
canefields	lead	papaya

Here we've concentrated on two words which look and sound almost alike, a minimal pair, and two Hawaiian words which are difficult to spell. Another useful pattern for drill, which is not included in this lesson, would be words containing one sound which is repre-

sented by several different graphemes or grapheme sequences. The several ways of spelling /iy/, the high-front tense vowel, is an example.

Step Five is writing the dialogue.

Jim: I'm glad you came to Hilo. When did you come?
Jeff: I came on Wednesday. I came here with my father.
Jim: What do you like best on the Big Island?
Jeff: In Illinois we had lakes and lots of cornfields, and it was cold. Here I like the ocean, the canefields, and the warm weather.
Jim: Which island foods do you like?
Jeff: I like the mahimahi and papaya; they're good. But I don't like lichies; they're icky.
Jim: What do you think of coconuts?
Jeff: One of them hit me on the head. They're hard as lead.

The dialogue fulfills several purposes. It provides a more natural format, one which is different from the narrative containing the sound problems. And it introduces the grammatical target in a different format after the sound problems have been drilled. There is a total of four occurrences of the grammatical problem in this short dialogue. And it serves as a review of the sound problems; there are nine occurrences of final /d/ and six occurrences of final /z/.

We include no drills after this lesson since it is short enough for the student to memorize in a reasonable length of time. While there is widespread disagreement on the virtue of memorizing both native and target language material, we must agree that it is a valid approach if only because there are hundreds of things in every language that people say often, and always in the same way, things which might just as well be memorized at the very beginning of language study. Here, the targets are obvious, and interfering problems are few. If drills are necessary, they can be used to reinforce what has been learned in the text. There is no necessity for content questions.

In our adapted text, the Thai lesson, the drills are an initial learning device. They are necessary in order to isolate the target problems from all the others. But at least we've tried to focus on language problems as we also consider questions of content.

We ought to get beyond questions of content in teaching reading at beginning and intermediate levels. The need is a practical one, and the demand is upon us from ministries of education overseas. The foregoing suggests a way of making the reading text do a lot more language teaching than we are accustomed to ask of it. It has been my experience, and the experience of overseas teachers whom I have trained, that these methods of adaptation and composition are workable. And the result in either case is an interesting partner to, if not a replacement for, drills in isolation from all that the reading lesson contains.

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